Dear Fellow Broom Makers,

Hello to all. We wish everyone a happy, safe and healthy new year. Broommakers are a wonderful group of people who work to help and support each other. We enjoy reading the many notes and letters you send us throughout the year, especially those telling about brooming experiences of days gone by.

As important as broommaking has been, much of its history has never been recorded or compiled. Broommakers were rarely rich and famous. Records of old broomshops don’t exist or are hard to find. We have personally tried unsuccessfully to obtain information on broomshops we know existed in our area.

The BMN was started in 1995 to provide a forum for communication amongst broommakers. In January 2001, Dana Harlan moved us into the computer age and began the broommakers news group on Yahoo. (brooms@yahoogroups.com), giving broommakers another way to communicate with each other. Broommakers are communicating better now than ever before.

Over the years Dr. Sam Moyer has compiled directions for making brooms and broom making equipment for all of us to share. He is now inviting other broomers to add to this collection. (see page 4)

Continued on page 3
Selected Price List for Craft Broom Artisans

Craft quality raw broom corn:
- 10-lb. Introductory package $30.00, plus UPS.
- 50-lb. boxes $80.00 ($1.60 per lb.) plus UPS.
- Full bale $1.42 per lb. (about 260 lb./bale)

Processed broom corn:
- 12” - 14” - 16” - 18” - 20” - 22” Hurl in bales… $1.80 per lb.
- 16” - 18” - 20” Insides in bales….. $1.54 per lb.
- Broom corn stalks in bales…. $0.80 per lb.

NOTE: Prices are for bales shipped by truck. Add $0.10 per lb. for bales which have to be broken down for UPS box shipments.

Knives $9.00 ea. *Cuffs $15.00 ea. * Double point Needles $16.00 ea
Wire $2.00 per lb. (coils average 18 lbs.) * Nails $2.00 per lb. * Cotton twine $5.00 ea.
* Dyed hemp twine (various colors) $4.00 ea. * 100 lb. test hemp twine $5.00 ea.

Wood handles, all clear lacquered (sold in bundles of 50):
- 15/16 x 42 hardwood $5.75 ea. * 7/8 x 30 pine $4.45 ea. * 1 x 42 hardwood $5.78 ea. * 3/4 x 24 pine $3.65 ea. * 15/16 x hardwood sanded only - no lacquer $5.75 ea.

Note: All prices on above merchandise are “FOB Greensboro, NC.” Check web site for on-line purchasing and other items for sale.

We accept VISA and Master Card.

“Prices are subject to change without notice.”

CLASSIFIED

Looking for a broom trimmer. Reasonably priced. Please contact the Editors at broommakersnews@hotmail.com or snail mail at BMN, 2306 Route 207, Campbell Hall, NY 10916

* 2003 – Dr. Hadley completed dwarf Deer broom corn.
* 2004 – Roaming camels destroy 5% of the crop of Ethiopian broom corn.
* 2006 – I completed multicolored dwarf broom corn: too late to help save the US industry.
* 2006 – Dec. Problems importing broom corn due to fungi on seeds, which is a risk to the US sorghum industry. The US Department of Agriculture does not allow the seeds in shipments.
* 2007 – New Broom Stitching Machines made in China. Same function/spare parts as Italian machine.
* 2008 – Is the US broom production returning to "cottage industry"?
Rise and Fall of the US Broom Industry
(gleaned from BROOM, BRUSH & MOP, especially Tim Monahan's 1986 review) Sam Moyer, Ph.D.

- 1793- The US “industrial revolution” began in 1793 at Slater's Mill (www.woonsocket.org/slater.htm) Pawtucket RI. The invention of textile machines made factory production more efficient than the cottage industry.
- 1869- invention of a broom sewing machine. The US broom industry may have begun.
- 1904- the first broom corn dealer was from Wichita KS (AMEX today)
- 1915- 52,242 tons raw broom corn was grown in US. For 50 years (1915-65) annual average was 41,000 tons.
- 1924- Another dealer began in Wichita, he operated 14 branches in different states including one in NC; which became RE Caddy. At one time, there were 1,500 broom shops in the US, making 45 million brooms.
- 1965-1975- change from all US to all Mexican broomcorn due to cheaper labor. Peak of 12,201 processed tons in 1976.
- 1967-- Plastic brooms made an impact.
- 1970'-s- Wall to wall carpeting caused a decline in broom consumption.
- 1980's- Mexican government tried to control price of broom corn by creating a shortage. This created a demand for broomcorn from Hungary and other countries. Plans for growing it in two places in IL, didn't happen.
- 1982- comment in article:" one of the industry's problems: difficult to glamorize a broom; innovation is needed" (not profitable for wholesale marketing) .
- 1983- Dr. Hadley (in IL) and I (in NJ) started research to develop machine harvestable broomcorn to grow in US.
- 1986- Contest for the fastest broom maker at Arcola IL Broomcorn Festival. make three brooms: four rows of stitching; first row 10 stitches, second row 11, 3rd 12, 4th 13.
- 1987- June Drug Activity caused problems with the Mexican supply.
- 1987- Dec. Riots by Cuban Detainees Destroy Broom Factory: Atlanta Federal prison. By law, the federal government must get its brooms or industries for the blind...
- 1991- April Machinery Issue: NO broom making equipment featured.
- 1998- President Clinton removes protection: 100,000 dozen may enter duty free.
- 1999- Bobbie McClure, Van Horn, TX turns brooms into an art form (most artistic brooms I have seen)
- 2000- Mexican factory work causing labor shortage and problems with the supply of broom corn.
- 2003- Jan. “at least 19 countries trying to help replace the Mexican crop”

WE HAVE A NEW ADDRESS!
The BMN has a new address.
Please send all correspondences to our new address:
2306 Route 207, Campbell Hall, NY 10916.
Correspondences sent to our former address have taken up to several months to get to us, and some may not have been forwarded to us. Please, if you have any doubts that mail has not reached us do not hesitate to let us know. We are in no way affiliated with any other organization or museum.

Continued from page 1
Bill Soetaert and Vaughn Russell in conjunction with the Smithsonian are compiling and documenting information on broom making and broom shops in the United States and Canada. (see page 13) Please contact them if you have any information that they may need.

Many people write and tell us of the brooming experiences of their fathers, grandfathers, friends and teachers. Please continue to do so. Let us make this the year to write down, record or videotape, collect and compile this information, so it can be shared for us and for future generations. It is up to us to save the history of broom making.

If you have any questions you would like to ask feel free to contact us at the above address for snail mail. Or you can e-mail us at broommakersnews@hotmail.com.
ATTENTION BROOMERS

Dr. Sam Moyer has written instructions for making various kinds of brooms and broom making equipment. Other broomers have since added additional information and techniques. Sam is now inviting more broomers to add their broom making instructions. Each design/invention will be included with the author’s name and contact information. The editors of the BMN will be taking over the new publication of Sam’s How to Make Brooms and Broom Making Equipment. Please send your instructions to be included in the book, to us at the BMN’s address.

Impressions By Lirica Broom Shoppe

Handmade round brooms/besoms is our specialty...custom work for all occasions, herbs & more!

Watch for our holiday specials.

Stop by our web site www.impressbylirica.com to view our many creations.

Sam Moyer’s Tension Wheel
Letter Sudoku

Fill in the grid so that every row, column and colored box contains ALL the letters in SHAKER. You can only use each letter once in every row, column and colored box.

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FLYING BROOMS

Recipe by: Christy Hamilton, Old Hickory Tennessee
As printed in Southern Living 1998 Annual Recipes (Oxmoor House)

Ingredients

<table>
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<tr>
<td>1/2 cup butter or margarine, softened</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/2 cup firmly packed light brown sugar</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 teaspoon vanilla extract</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 cup all-purpose flour</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 (8 1/2&quot; long) pretzel rods, halved</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (2 oz.) chocolate candy coating squares melted</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1(4.25 oz.) tube red/orange decorating frosting</td>
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</tbody>
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Instructions

Beat butter at medium speed until creamy. Gradually add brown sugar, beating until blended. Add flour & salt, beating until blended. Stir in vanilla. Shape dough into 16 (1 1/4") balls. Place pretzel rods on ungreased baking sheets. Press a ball of dough onto cut end of each pretzel. Press dough firmly with a fork to resemble broom bristles. Bake at 350 degrees F. for 10-12 minutes. Cool on baking sheets for 2 minutes, remove from baking sheets place on wire rack to cool completely.

Place brooms on wax paper, spoon melted candy coating over pretzel and cookie where joined; let stand until firm. Decorate as desired with colored frosting. Yields 16 cookies.
Irwin Houck Richard (1881-1960) was one of America’s most notable broom makers. Born on a farm near Perkiomenville, PA, Richard’s first job was as a salesman with the International Harvester Co. In 1902, following the birth of his wife’s third child, he switched careers to spend more time at home, for awhile working as a cigar packer with Miller and Kline’s Red Hill Cigar Co., one of two cigar firms in the borough. In 1907, he began producing brooms as a sideline, growing his own broom corn and “manufacturing” about six brooms a day. Not a large output, but he was operating in an 8’ x 10’ room in the family home at 327 Main Street, Red Hill. Soon thereafter, farmers began bringing their own broom corn to the house for Richard to make brooms for them. The business was expanding.

In 1910, Richard purchased a broom-making machine and hired his first employee, Otto Warkagen, who had learned broom-making in his native Germany. Warkagen lived with the Richard family during the work week, returning to his home in Zionsville for weekends. (In those days, one could take the train between these small Pennsylvania towns!) Business grew, and in 1912 a second machine was purchased, a building was constructed in the back yard to house the growing concern, and a second employee was hired. It was this Mr. Roberts who taught English to the Richard family, who up to that time had spoken only German.

By 1920, the Red Hill Broom Works had outgrown its humble beginnings. Brooms were being sold outside the immediate area and customers included the Reading Railroad, the Pennsylvania Railroad, and Bethlehem Steel; industrial rather than household brooms were now the mainstay of the company. In that year, Richard purchased a property that included Albrecht’s Hotel (later the Red Hill Hotel) and a three-story structure as the new home of the broom works. The basement floor was set aside to store the inventory of broom corn, now shipped in from Oklahoma, Kansas, and Texas and purchased by Richard on his many buying trips. The first floor was used for the manufacturing process, the machinery driven by a system of interconnected leather belts. The second floor continued to be used as Red Hill’s entertainment center, its 300-seat auditorium witnessing the production of plays, minstrel shows, movies, commencements, and church functions. The top floor was the meeting place of the Order of the Knights of Friendship, one of the many fraternal organizations that developed during the late 1800s.

By 1927, the factory employed 20 men and output had increased to 4,000 brooms per day—a quite leap from the initial production level of 6 per day. By the 1930s, industrial brooms accounted for roughly 80% of sales.

*Alice Beltz is a daughter of, Sidney Richard and John Henry are grandchildren of, Irwin and Carrie (Renninger) Richard.

In the 1930s, Richard was joined by his three eldest sons—Claude, Nelson, and Clarence—who spent their entire working lives in association with the Red Hill Broom Works and, following Richard’s death in 1960, carried on its operation until 1974. In 1974, the Red Hill Broom Works was sold to the Hamburg (PA) Broom Works, which continues in operation. The Red Hill factory was demolished in the 1983—for some a sign of local progress; for others, including this writer, the sad passing of an era.

We thought it would be nice to dedicate a section of the Broom Makers News to check out what other broom makers are doing throughout the country. If you would like to be in future columns drop us a line and let us know what’s happening with you.

J.P. Welch of Justamere Tree Farm was recently a guest on the Martha Stewart Show. You can watch a video of his March 7th appearance at http://www.marthastewart.com/show/the-martha-stewart-show/chef-shannon-bennet?

Dave Applebaum of Catskill Mountain Broom Works has been making brooms for the past few years. He hand picks his handles from the trees around his upstate NY home. He hand ties all his brooms at a tying table.

Virginia Bregman has taught both Jay and myself how to make brooms. She had been a broom maker for over twenty years. She has since retired to Ocala, FL to be near her daughter. Ginny still sends us hints and tips on broom making. She also reminds us when the equipment needs to be tightened and oiled.

Justin Todman of the US Virgin Islands learned broom making from his father and is carrying on the tradition, selling his brooms to the tourists. He feels he is part of a dying art. If you're visiting the U.S. Virgin Islands, or would like a broom sent to you made out of palm trees, please contact: Justin Todman, P. O. Box 7951, St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands 00801, (340) 775-1132.
Continued from page 7

There is no man in the industry that rejoices more than I do as I am relieved of the hardest and most trying days of my life, but I can rejoice in the duty performed to my fellow man. I can also rejoice at this Christmas time in thanking each and every one connected in the broom industry for the loyal support given me in those trying days. (Capitals in original.)

By Way of Conclusion

Broom makers are indebted to Irwin Richard for his dedicated work in furthering the interests of the industry. His fellow manufacturers knew him as a producer of quality brooms, as an astute businessman, and as a leader in the two main campaigns of the period in which those associated with broom making were deeply interested. I knew him as a kindly grandfather who chewed tobacco, had a constant supply of candy corn in his pocket, and was always ready with a nickel to treat my cousins and me to an ice cream cone when we went to the broom factory to play among the stack of broom corn and pester our uncles on the floor of the factory. But it was the same man. He is missed.

Irwin Richard

Irwin Richard, in addition to overseeing the process of the manufacturing of quality brooms, was an activist, both at the community level and in the interests of U.S. broom makers—and this forms the heart of this narrative. At the community level, he served as Red Hill’s burgess (mayor) from 1922 to 1926, was chairman of the Water Commission, a trustee of Perkiomen School (a private prep school in neighboring Pennsburg), and a board member of the Red Hill Board of Trade and the Schwenksville National Bank.

However, the real historic interest lies in his work for the Broom Institute and the Eastern Manufacturers Association. Richard helped found both organizations, the former in 1920, and served as the latter’s first president in 1926 and in subsequent years. (He also served as president of the Eastern Broom Manufacturers and Supply Dealers.) It was these organizations’ membership, with Richard as the driving force, which organized the movement to establish standardization, by which customers could be assured that the brooms they were purchasing were certified to be of a certain quality. Richard and others worked closely with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Department of Commerce to establish the standards by which broom were to be graded. On July 1, 1931, legislation was finally passed and the standardized broom became a reality. In part, the legislation conferred authority to: “The Broom Institute, and Association of Manufacturers who have agreed to make all brooms conform to the grades established and label them according to these grades…” Shortly after the bill’s passage, broom customers were told, in promotional campaigns organized by the National Standards Council, to: “Look for the Grade Mark on Each Broom You Buy.” The original grades were “Super Grade,” “Fancy Grade,” “Service Grade,” and “Utility Grade,” each with a specified quality of broom corn, twine, wire, and handle. Length and weight were also stipulated.

Congress honored Richard by assigning the Red Hill Broom Works the first certification for the production of standardized brooms. The “first” standardized Red Hill broom was given by Richard to Eleanor Roosevelt on July 31, 1931, and now resides in the Smithsonian Museum, Washington, DC. For his work in organizing the movement to bring standardization to broom manufacturing and in helping to develop those standards, Irwin Richard was recognized in the 1932 edition of Who’s Who in America.

The second memorable activity that Richard spearheaded was the elimination of prison-produced brooms. In the early part of the century, those who produced brooms as a business operation had to compete with brooms produced by prisoners. Obviously, such brooms were produced with much cheaper labor and broom-making was a rather labor-intensive process. Hence, businessmen in the industry were disadvantaged. Richard and the Broom Institute, in particular, organized a campaign to have Congress legislate prison competition out of business. In December 1928 they succeeded. A Christmas greeting from Richard as president of the Eastern Manufacturers Association in the January 1929 issue of Brooms, Brushes, and Mops, a leading industry publication of the day, says it all:

“A Merry Christmas. Yes, one of the happiest the broom industry ever had. A Christmas we can all rejoice in, and be thankful for. THE CONVICT LABOR BILL PASSED THE SENATE by a majority of 55 Yes and 11 against the bill.

This present came at a very unusual time, Christmas time….We can rejoice that we are relieved of this burden not only for this Christmas but for all the Christmases to come in the future. We can rejoice that 12,500 tons of broomcorn, that is worked up every year by the prison institutions, will eventually come back to us.

Continued on page 18
TRIPLE C LEATHER Co.
4209 Orange Cemetery Road, Morgantown KY 42261-9631
Phone: (270) 526-3835    Fax: (270) 526-5491
e-mail: triplec@logantele.com

Low cost leather laces for hanging brooms. Ask for current list of closeout specials in a wide variety of colors, lengths and widths. They will send a helpful sample card.

Broom Makers in The News
By: Henry Leonhardt

The August/September issue of Farm and Ranch Living magazine pages 48-50 includes pictures and a 3 page story about the Schanz Broom and Basket Shop in West Amana, Iowa. The article in the Farm and Ranch Living has put us in contact with people from coast to coast. I even received a call from a broom maker in Canada who was looking for parts to his broom machine. Strange as it may seem we also had a blind man visiting us who wants to become a broom maker. I took him through the making of one shoulder broom. He was quite adept at it. I say it is strange because the machine I am working with was built by Amana people for a blind broom maker, Phillip Griese, who was the broom maker in West Amana for many years prior to the “Big Change” here in the Amanas.

Dr. Sam Moyer (check payable)
Geneticist and the Jersey Jerry Broomsquire
(856) 222-0713
911 Larkspur Pl., Mt. Laurel NJ 08054
e-mail:moyerbase@aol
web site:http://www.broomcrafters.com

FREE: Seed for hybrid multicolored broomcorn easy to harvest. (Send donation after you make a profit)

NEW: seed cleaned to use in planter AND treated with Concep III to allow use of preemergence Dual or a mixture of Atrazine with Dual (Bicep) to control grassy weeds

NEW: Dustpans:
FREE by email or $1 snail mail instructions for the woodwork by you or a wood worker.

FREE by email or $1 snail mail photo of completed dustpan and detailed layouts/patterns for 12x9” and 15x10.375” pans made by a sheet metal worker for your sheet metal worker. OR pans made by a sheet metal worker $3.75 small; $4.00 large +shipping. Nice metal: 26 gauge galvanized, spangle, G-90 coating
SAMPLE of complete dustpans $15 small; $20 large
Please include a printed self sticking address label, if possible.

Answer to Sudoku puzzle on page 20

Broom Makers,
Do you need rustic broom handles? I am skilled at selecting choice handles for your use! I am currently taking orders for cobweb handles (18’’), hearth broom handles (18’’), long handles (40’’), walking sticks (60’’).
Inquire for prices.

Brooms by Little John
Ph: 920-457-9290
Email: moonwise_herbs@sbglobal.net
www.brooms.moonwischerbs.com
Brooms in Israel

By Raphael Kerem

There was a recent exhibition at the Israel Museum in Tel Aviv, Israel entitled “Brushes”. The exhibit featured over 2,000 entries of utilitarian brushes and brooms, antique to ultra-modern. Accompanying the exhibit is a catalog/book titled “BRUSH” authored by the curators Daniel Rozensztroch and Shipi Slavin, and published by Pointed Leaf Press, LLC. The book consists mostly of full page colored photographs depicting single or multiple pieces. It is divided into seven chapters: History, Upstairs, Downstairs, Bazaar, Ethnic, Kitsch and Design.

The Ethnic section would probably be of most interest to handcraft broom makers. The brooms and brushes in this section are from Africa, the Near and Far East and Central America. They are made of natural materials with a note as to place of origin.

Over the years I have met a few broom collectors, and have seen one interesting collection. This prompted me to start collecting Chinese calligraphy brushes, which are in a related field. I and perhaps other readers would be interested to know of extensive broom/brush collections, from diverse ethnic backgrounds, which could be viewed for inspiration.

MARKET INFORMATION AND OUTLOOK FOR 2008

As we conclude 2007, we have had another strong year in sales to craft broom makers. Our craft customer base now is over 800 people. We continue to have a very good mix of new customers, established ones, and museums/historic sites.

This means that our regular base is doing well with craft and art fairs, retail sales at their stores, as well as with wholesalers. At the same time, new people are coming to the craft and enjoying it. Many of you teach broom making classes, which makes new entry into our craft even easier.

We were able to buy good quality broom corn for our inventory all year long, and that quality has improved steadily during the fall. Whether you prefer the processed-to-length hurl and insides, or the craft quality raw broom corn, we have what you need.

Our next “new” broom corn (2008 crop) will be available in June or July. This means everything we purchase and sell until then is “2007 broom corn.” Mexico remains the only viable source for craft quality merchandise. The benefit to all of us is quick turnaround, long term relationships and predictability.

At our web site, you can purchase supplies any time day or night. Please visit us at www.recaddy.com.

We thank all of you for your business, and to the best of our abilities we will have all the supplies you need, when you need them.

Sincerely,
Richard Caddy

Smith College
Class of 1928

This was submitted by
Virginia Bregman

Brooms Internet Newsgroup 2008

Founded January 4, 2001, our Brooms newsgroup on Yahoo has been growing steadily. There are now 181 members, mostly in the U.S., but there are international members as well. The group was formed as a forum for broom makers and anyone interested in the craft. Any information on the history, culture and craft of broom making is welcome and encouraged. Individuals seeking or selling tools, materials and equipment can post notices on the newsgroup. Individual emails can be received by every member either at the site or in their own inbox. Photos can be posted in a special archive.

Many people have asked the newsgroup how to get started and have met with generous offers of one on one mentoring help or printed instructions. I’ve seen many alerts about equipment available on eBay as well as equipment offers from individuals. We get an occasional request for marketing help from developing countries.

For those not yet signed up, go to http://www.groups.yahoo.com/ , see “Join a group” and type “brooms” in the search block and click search. Fill out the sign in form and submit. You can customize settings to receive an email when anyone posts to the group. You can post messages either from the newsgroup site or simply by posting to the address: Brooms@yahoogroups.com.
Hello fellow broom squires. My name is Ron Snyder and I’ve been making historically accurate hand tied primitive brooms for 25 years. My broom shop is currently located near Blaine, Washington in the far Northwest corner of the country, near the Canadian border. Before that, I sold brooms in Michigan, Ohio, and Washington D.C.

In the past two years, I’ve had an increasing number of people from all walks of life ask me to make wedding brooms for them to jump over at their wedding ceremonies. Historically, African Americans in this country, as a response to the inhumanity of slavery are often credited with starting the “jumping the broom” tradition. Slaves were property. They were not allowed to marry, and therefore were forced to develop an underground language and traditions. One of the oldest traditions, with roots in Africa, was the act of holding hands and ‘jumping the broom” as part of a marriage ceremony.

My wedding brooms are always unique and whimsical. This year, I’ve made two that are woven on 12’ to 14’ long curly cherry handles. Another favorite is two brooms from one handle, sewn as one broom, in other words, “two become one”. My most recent wedding broom is a straight 3’ elk horn with a broom woven on each end.

I can’t say that wedding brooms have dramatically increased my sales, but they certainly have added another dimension to my broom shows and presentations. In fact, I was actually invited to one of the weddings and recognized at the ceremony as the man who made the wedding broom for the couple’s “broom jumping”. That was great fun and a real honor for a broom squire.

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**Jumping The Broom**

By Ron Snyder, The Circle of Trees Art Studio, circleoftrees@mac.com

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**Attention All Subscribers**

We wish to thank you for your continued support throughout the year for the BMN and the broom making trade. When the BMN was first published in 1995, it was unknown. Because of your support we are again able to publish the Broom Makers News at $5.00 an issue. Thank you for your prompt response of the subscription cost. This helps our bookkeeping a lot and our upfront costs. All broom makers on our mailing list will be sent a reminder card in the fall. Please remember to send it back with your five dollar check (made payable to Joan Fedor and Cheryl Riccardi, putting Broom Makers News in the memo), so that we can continue to send you your BMN. The banks no longer accept checks made out to Broom Makers News.

We thank you for the understanding in this matter. The BMN is the only printed forum for broom makers of the cottage industry. It is important for broom makers both new and experienced to have this newsletter available to keep abreast of the happenings in the industry.

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If you would like to receive the next edition of the Broom Makers News please fill out the form below and send it along with $5.00 (to incur the cost of publishing) to Broom Makers News, 2306 Route 207, Campbell Hall, NY 10916. Thank you for your support. Some broom makers have requested a copy of our mailing list. **PLEASE** let us know if you would **NOT** like your address shared with other broom makers.

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Please make checks payable to Cheryl Riccardi and Joan Fedor. Put Broom Makers News in the Memo.
We went to visit Dave Applebaum’s Catskill Mountain Broomworks shop in July 2007

Mr. Jim Harmon
1934-2007

By: Chris Robbins

On Thursday, October 18, 2007, not only did I lose a special friend, the family of broom makers lost a very special craftsman in the passing of Jim Harmon of Springfield, Kentucky. Mr. Jim had a giving spirit for an art he wanted preserved.

As a fourteen-year-old boy with a yearning to know more about broom making, Mr. Jim recognized the curiosity in me and volunteered to teach me the art of broom making. On a hot July 16th, he and his wife Mary Lou came and spent two hours with me in that humid little cabin at the Bittersweet Cabin Museum in Renfro Valley. Teaching me the basics I needed to know, he demonstrated with skill and expertise the construction of a broom. He then let me take the wheel and guided me through, just like a father teaching his son to drive.

Using the guidance and skill Mr. Jim had shown me, I continued to practice and teach myself how to make different types of brooms. Wanting to follow my dream of being a broom maker, Mr. Jim just happened to have an extra set of broom equipment that I could purchase. These machines were a little different from the ones I had used at the cabin, but I could now work at home when I wanted.

If I had any questions or any trouble, all I had to do was call Mr. Jim and he would help me in any way he could. He always told me that brooms were a dying craft and he was so happy that I wanted to help preserve it. There was one time I ran out of broom corn and couldn’t buy it anywhere since it was in short supply. Mr. Jim made sure that I could continue making brooms by letting me purchase some from him until a new shipment arrived. Throughout my broom making career, he has always been there to help me and guide me through whatever troubles I may have had. He has been like a grandfather to me and I will always have a special skill he has helped me develop.

Over the past years I have been to many festivals demonstrating my skill, but never forgetting to tell others of my special friend who helped me get started. Mr. Jim Harmon will be greatly missed by the many people he has helped. His kindness and love of broom making will never be forgotten.

Editors note: To send expressions of sympathy to his family mail them to: Mary Lou Harmon, 227 West Main Street, Springfield, KY, 40069
ODDS AND ENDS

Here are some odds and ends from the broom group this past year. Hope the information is useful to everyone.

Vendor Insurance: Some events/craft fairs that broom makers do require vendors insurance. Here are some suggestions that others had: I have my insurance through The Hartford. I carry $500,000 home based business policy for about $250.00 a year. Bob Aborn

I've heard rave reviews of this company: http://www.specialtyinsuranceagency.com/vendor-insurance.html. Crys

Sam Moyer uses State Farm. Call your local insurance company and inquire.

Loosening String: If you soak your broomcorn before winding it (which is recommended for a tighter broom) be careful of the string you use. Some string, like hemp twine, stretch over time because of the moisture. Cotton twine will stretch and hold the tension over time. Using a beeswax on the twine (or using a petroleum base string) might help the fibers from loosening. While soaking the broom corn place either Clorox or Murphy's Oil Soap in the water. Some prefer hot water while others like cold.

Broom Making Videos: Here are some delightful videos of broom making and a song from Bob Aborn. One is of little John and the others are from Turkey.

http://www.myspace.com/brooms_by_little_john
http://www.youtube.com/v/D3PTwhFS85M"/>
http://rotaborn.homestead.com/broomshop.html

Help Save Our History

We Need Your Help so that we can save the history of the North American Broom Industry. We have selected The National Museum of Canada and The Smithsonian Museum as depositories for the safe keeping of our history.

Over the last few years we have compiled a data base from the following categories: Broomcorn publications and Agricultural reports, Articles and books on the Shaker broom making industry, Patents on equipment and brooms, Catalogs from broom factories and equipment suppliers, Industry publications, Books with information on broom making, Articles from Magazines and Periodicals, Broom Lore, Census Data, and A listing of broom factories and industry suppliers. Along with pictures, drawings, advertisements, documents and publications of all kinds.

We need your help to acquire as much documentation as possible before it is lost. Please contact us before sending anything and we ask you not to send originals as we can not guarantee their safe return, good copies are all that we need. We will reimburse postage and copying costs if you contact us prior to shipping. Thank you for your help.

USA please contact: Bill Soetaert, phone # 816-796-6917 after 10am, Email: broomsbesoms@comcast.net

Canada please contact: Vaughn Russell: phone # 416-498-5375 Email: v.russell@rogers.com